

Tech democratisation will set the tone for 2021

By [Andrew Smit](#) and [Johan Walters](#)

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If Covid-19 was the villain of 2020, then digital was the hero. As in-store transactions plummeted, e-commerce rushed in to pick up the slack. Rapid digitalisation saw smaller companies suddenly able to compete directly with our large enterprises and the further democratisation of tech is set to boost this trend.

What's clear is that building the framework for agile responses is the best and only way to survive 2021.

[Andrew Smit](#), head of data solutions and [Johan Walters](#), lead tech solutions consultant of Incubeta take a look at the martech trends for 2021.



Andrew Smit, head of data solutions at Incubeta

Someone broke the crystal ball

The insanity of Covid-19 meant all of our behaviour patterns, online and offline, were changed completely. The way we searched, what we searched for, and how we were spending were all turned on their head - rendering algorithms all but useless.

Data coming out of the US, for instance, saw Black Friday-like spending taking place in April. Purchases of home computing and gaming hardware reached 2019 festive season levels just a month after most of the world went in lockdown.

The reason? The Covid stimulus cheques had just been issued in the US. This sort of anomaly made forecasting for 2021 almost impossible, and it's important for digital marketers to remember that we can't expect to plug in 2020 numbers and expect to see meaningful 2021 forecasts come out.

What we need is to enable our teams to deal with what is thrown at us and fortunately there are some interesting tech options on the table.

Martech to help measurement

One of the big events of 2020 came fairly late in the year. The October launch of Google Analytics 4 (GA4) brought with it a shake up in the martech space. For companies, both large and small, a whole new way of tracking and measuring was free, at their fingertips and, what's more, it was now being driven by powerful machine learning.

One of the unintended consequences of the GA4 launch has been marketing departments having to re-visit, and often refresh their measurement plans. In many instances, this back-to-basics requirement has proved exceptionally useful as this foundational perspective allows for marketing leaders and their agencies to take a fresh look at how things are done.

Another positive is that in the ever-increasing democratisation of tech, GA4 has proved to be a stepping stone for smaller companies when it comes to cloud computing. It allows them to experience the real benefits of analytics as well as the power of machine learning and, looking into 2021, this trend is set to continue.

Privacy requirements will change how we engage

With all the new laws demanding transparency and accountability around personal data, organisations will need to find ways to reach their customers in a compliant fashion.

Enter the private marketplace...

A private marketplace or PMP, is a space where advertising is sold programmatically exclusively between two parties. While these invite-only marketplaces are taking off internationally, we don't see it being a big attraction locally this year, but the trend should be on your radar as a marketing pro.

For publishers, meanwhile, this is great news and truly heralds the age where first-party data becomes king. This gives publishers a real advantage, but will also mean they have to actively manage their websites if they hope to cash in on the opportunity in the coming years.

AR moves mainstream

We have been talking about augmented reality for years now, most especially as it pertains to the retail sector. We can now also confirm that AR has gone mainstream after it was officially moved off the Gartner hype cycle. Embracing this immersive tech, Shopify has launched its 3D visualisation at checkout along with AR and VR APIs. Even smaller companies can now build their entire catalogue in AR and enjoy the significantly higher check out rates as shoppers engage with their products in a much more personal way.

Finally, while we don't know everything, we know that in 2021 companies must invest in tech, invest in skills, and understand the process to support the insights driven by the data. As tech becomes more democratised and is available to more people, the competitive landscape will be heating up. It won't just be about who has the most money to throw at a problem, it will be about who is the best able to understand a challenge and has the knowledge to tackle it. More importantly, it will be about who can build the framework to enable rapid responses to a world which (as we have learnt in the 2020), can change on a dime.

Look at [how to empower your marketing team, so you can respond to uncertainty](#).

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